

Cultural heritage as a comprehensive evolutionary perspective on regional resilience of the Bedouins of Nuweiba in South Sinai, Egypt

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Today, the concept of regional resilience has drawn scholar's attention in the context of the current global economic crisis. This has brought about more clarity on the definition and meaning of resilience, however, no global consensus, as 'One size fits none'. In the built environment, there is a tendency to negate the engineering, equilibrium concept of resilience, in which resilience is regarded as a response to external disturbances and a move back to a steady state and the ability of a community to bounce back after a major disturbance. This paper instead advocates an evolutionary approach to regional resilience, in which the focus is on the long-term capacity of regions to reconfigure their socio-cultural and socio-economic structure is adopted.

In a large country like Egypt with long standing culture, heritage and civilization on one hand and the governmental pressure for rebuilding communities and providing long-term strategies for sustainable development. There is a pressing need to advocate a holistic integrative approach to regional resilience instead, where socio-cultural aspects vary intensely, and the focus should be on the long-term capacity of regions to reconfigure their socio-economic structure. However, Martin (2012) argues that the long-term adaptive capacity of regions is still 'largely un-researched'. As such, an evolutionary perspective on regional resilience is still work very much in progress and this research is part of work done with reference to the South Sinai region in Egypt.

The paper discusses a timely topic addressing the vulnerable Bedouin communities in South Sinai. South Sinai is a well-known international tourist destination. Bedouin tribes in the area add a distinctive cultural component to the natural attractions. As tourism is the main economic sector in this area, the Bedouin commonly rely on it as the main source of livelihood, thus, finding themselves vulnerable in front of external investors and general recession. Invasion of external developments on local settings and contexts of various remote societies in Egypt has been evident in many cases, as in South Sinai. This in turn risks a potential loss of distinctive indigenous cultures and identities. The paper is part of continued work of the researchers on cultural heritage in Egypt and presents part of their work of an international research-funded project by the British Council Newton Musharafa Researcher Link Fund between the School of Architecture and the Built Environment, University of Lincoln in the UK and Integrative Urbanism and Sustainable Development (IUSD), Ainshams University, Cairo, to develop a sustainable resilient framework for local community resilience that conserves the cultural heritage of the Bedouins and sustains their livelihoods.

The work presented in this paper stands as a catalyst for generating new sustainable strategies and approaches that will be of utmost importance to the socio-cultural and socio-economic welfare of low-income communities in Egypt and the benefit of other stakeholders at large.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; Resilient Cities; Sustainable Strategies; Nuweiba

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